



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/S

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

June 12, 1980

TO: The Secretary

FROM: HA - Patricia M. Derian *P*

SUBJECT: Visit of the U.S. Secretary of the Navy
to Argentina

No one can tell me why this trip is taking place. We are going to have to be able to answer this question. The fact that he is not a presidential emissary is not going to cut any ice with anyone. The trip will be exploited by the Argentines, as the letter to Somoza was by the Nicaraguan government. A trip of this visibility, by a person of such high rank even if attributed to our "continued search for better ways to pursue the objectives of U.S. foreign policy in relation to Argentina and to improved relations" will give the lie to our statement of June 2 that "there is no change in our human rights policy."

We have just completed a carefully developed, integrated strategy toward Argentina for use during the remainder of this year. This pointless addition makes a mockery of the carefully balanced, graduated approach worked out by the Department and other USG agencies.

In recent days, we have approached the Argentines asking that they sponsor and hold in their countries some substitute athletic events, and agreed to support their invitation to host the OAS meeting. We have recently sent Luther Hodges, General Goodpastor and Ambassador Smith. Now we send our Secretary of the Navy. What is the message to the Argentine government? No matter what we say, the fact remains, we are courting them. What is our message to the Argentine people? It is the same.

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(X-GDS, HA:PMDerian 6/12/80)

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Less than six weeks after we were obliged to confirm our continued human rights policy, in the midst of our political campaign, we hand ourselves this absurd situation; this is not an administration that can afford to set itself up for more criticism of an inconsistent and erratic course. This is a mistake we don't have to make.

I know that the Department does not favor the trip, but trying to limit the damage isn't going to be sufficient. We need to keep trying right up to the landing of the airplane to change the decision.

cc: D - Mr. Christopher
P - Mr. Newsom
T - Mr. Nimetz
ARA - Mr. Bowdler

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